

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendment and following remarks.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 3-5, 14, 17, 20 and 22 are pending in this application. Claims 3-5, 14, 17, 20 and 22 are allowed. Claim 1 is rejected. By this amendment, claims 1, 14, 17 and 20 are amended. Claims 3-5 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 23-27 are added. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

Objection

Claim 20 has been objected to. The Office Action indicates that the term “pattern” in line 5 of the claim should be -- patterns --.

Claim 20 has been amended to correct the term “patterns” into -- patterns --.

Applicants respectfully request that this objection be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated either by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0161678 to Misaka (“Misaka”) or by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0198872 to Yamazoe et al. (“Yamazoe”).

Claim 1 is directed to a mask that comprises “plural contact hole patterns.” Claim 1 further recites “plural auxiliary patterns” that include a first auxiliary pattern and a second auxiliary pattern.

Misaki discloses a mask pattern that includes a main pattern to be transferred through exposure and an auxiliary pattern that diffracts exposing light and is not transferred through the

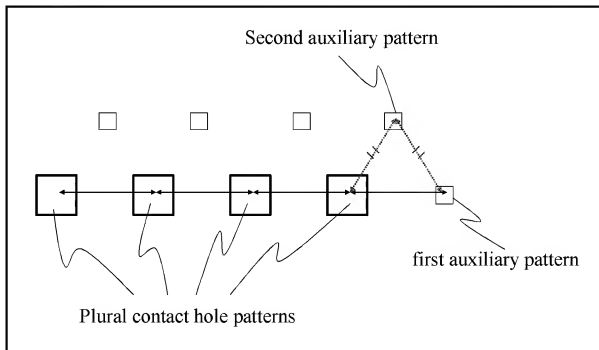
exposure. In Misaki, however, there is nothing that discloses plural contact hole patterns as recited in claim 1.

Yamazoe discloses an exposure method for using plural kinds of light to illuminate a mask that arranges a predetermined pattern and an auxiliary pattern smaller than the predetermined pattern, so as to resolve the predetermined pattern without resolving the auxiliary pattern on a target via a projection optical system. However, Applicants believe that Yamazoe fails to show or suggest the second auxiliary pattern as specifically recited in claim 1.

Accordingly, claim 1 is believed neither anticipated by nor rendered obvious in view of the cited references (i.e., Misaki and Yamazoe), either taken alone or in combination, for at least the reasons discussed above.

Nonetheless, independent claims 1 and 20 have been amended for further clarification. In particular, referring to Fig. 11B and relevant portion of the specification (e.g., page 33, lines 17-27), amended claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a mask comprising plural contact hole patterns and plural auxiliary patterns. The plural auxiliary patterns include a first auxiliary pattern and plural second auxiliary patterns. The centers of the contact hole patterns and the center of the first auxiliary pattern are aligned at regular periods in a line. The centers of the plural second auxiliary patterns are offset from the line (i.e., the line that the centers of the contact hole patterns and the center of the first auxiliary pattern make) and each of the plural second auxiliary patterns is equally distant from two closest centers among the contact hole patterns and the first auxiliary pattern. Additionally, the plural second auxiliary patterns are arranged at both sides of the line. Method claim 20 is amended in a way that mirrors the mask recited in claim 1 as amended.

The following figure is a re-generated version of Fig. 11B of the original specification with added lines and descriptions for convenience. The figure shows an arrangement of the contact hole patterns, first auxiliary pattern and second auxiliary patterns as recited in claims 1 and 20 as amended.



Applicants believe that neither Misaki nor Yamazoe shows or suggests a mask structure or method thereon as recited in claims 1 and 20 as discussed above.

Accordingly, each of claims 1 and 20, and claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed above.

New Claims

New claims 23-27 have been added to recite the claimed invention in an alternative manner. Specifically, each of new claims 23-25 depends from claim 1 as amended, and each of

new claims 26 and 27 depends from claim 20 as amended. Claims 23-27 are accordingly believed to be allowable for at least similar reasons as for claims 1 and 20 discussed above.

Applicants believe that the application as amended with the added claims is in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

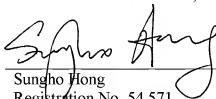
AUTHORIZATION

No petitions or additional fees are believed due for this amendment and/or any accompanying submissions. However, to the extent that any additional fees and/or petition is required, including a petition for extension of time, Applicants hereby petition the Commissioner to grant such petition, and hereby authorizes the Commissioner to charge any additional fees, including any fees which may be required for such petition, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500 (Order No. 1232-5299). A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ENCLOSED.

Respectfully submitted,
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Dated: December 22, 2006

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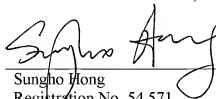
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